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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 6106

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SIPDIS

STATE FOR I/RF, PA/PR/FPC/W, IIP/G/EA, EAP/PD, R/MR,
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USTR FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE;
TREASURY FOR OASIA/IMI;
SECDEF FOR OASD/PA;
CP BUTLER OKINAWA FOR AREA FIELD OFFICE;
PACOM HONOLULU FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: TOKYO MEDIA REACTION - U.S. RAID ON AL-QAEDA
SITES IN SYRIA AND AFGHANISTAN

¶1. LEAD STORIES: All Thursday morning Japanese dailies led with an outline of the second pump-priming package compiled by the GOJ that includes some 38,000 yen in special living allowances, a drastic cut in highway tolls, and massive mortgage tax breaks.

¶2. "Syria Unusually Low Key" The top-circulation, moderate Yomiuri wrote from Cairo (10/30): "On the reported U.S. attack on an Al-Qaeda site in its own territory, the Syrian government unusually took a flexible stance by minimizing criticism of the U.S. France expressed regret over the cross-border assault, and the rest of the international community is not necessarily supportive of the U.S. The Assad administration apparently hopes to proceed with Middle East peace talks with Israel in its favor by playing the role of 'victim' and courting international backing."

¶3. "Neighbors Concerned about Iraq Being Used as Base for U.S. Attacks" A Washington correspondent for the liberal Asahi reported from Cairo (10/30): "The U.S. cross-border raid on a terrorist site in Syria is casting a shadow over the stalled talks between the U.S. and Iraq concerning a security treaty, as concern has emerged among Iraq's neighbors that Washington may use that country as a base from which to attack 'terror-sponsor states' in the event that the two countries seal an agreement on the continued stationing of U.S troops."

¶4. "War on Terror at Crossroads" The liberal Mainichi said (10/30): "The purported U.S. readiness to talk with the Taliban was prompted by realization on the

part of the Bush administration that its military-oriented strategy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan has worsened the quagmire in the two countries. It also represents a policy turnaround of adopting a mixture of soft and hard approaches. However, the two governments are distancing themselves from the U.S. amidst strong anti-American sentiment among their people.... If the next U.S. administration fails to produce results from dialogue with the Taliban and ends up allowing Afghanistan and Pakistan to be completely separated from the U.S., the U.S.-led war on terrorism might sink into a quagmire."

¶5. "U.S. to Begin Dialogue with Taliban" The top-circulation, moderate Yomiuri stated (10/30): "The U.S. readiness to talk with the Taliban demonstrates that the seven-year operation to stamp them out, which started shortly after 9/11, has hit a snag.... Dialogue with the Taliban will be carried out primarily by the Karzai government out of deference to anti-American sentiment within Afghanistan, with the U.S. offering indirect support.... However, as the Taliban's political and ideological inclination is clearly incompatible with that of the Karzai government, it remains to be seen whether the dialogue will bear fruit."

SCHIEFFER